

Snohomish County Hazard Mitigation Plan Update: Emergency Management Staff Memo

Background and Overview

Snohomish County Department of Emergency Management is requesting the Snohomish County Council approve and adopt the 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update.

Over 860,000 residents live within Snohomish County as of 2024, many of whom live or work within an area at risk from a natural hazard. Mitigation plans are key to breaking the cycle of disaster damage, reconstruction, and repeated damage. In 2000, the federal Disaster Mitigation Act required state and local governments to develop hazard mitigation plans (HMPs) as a condition for receiving disaster-related federal grant assistance (Public Law 106-390, approved by Congress on October 10, 2000). Commonly known as the DMA or the 2000 Stafford Act amendments, the act emphasizes the importance of community hazard mitigation planning before disasters occur. Snohomish County first adopted a Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2005; this update represents the fifth edition.

Working collaboratively with Snohomish County departments and 39 jurisdictional and special district planning partners, the plan analyzes the risk of 13 hazards in Snohomish County, as ranked by risk and probability by the planning partners. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) encourages multi-jurisdictional planning under its guidance for the DMA, and Title 44 of the Code of Federal Regulations (44 CFR) establishes criteria for multi-jurisdictional plans (Section 206.1). This plan has been set up in two volumes so that elements that are jurisdiction-specific can easily be distinguished from those that apply to the whole planning area:

- Volume 1 includes all the required elements of 44 CFR Section 201.6 that apply to the entire planning area. This includes the description of the planning process, public involvement strategy, goals and objectives, countywide Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA), countywide mitigation initiatives, and a plan maintenance strategy.
- Volume 2 includes all jurisdiction and tribal-specific elements required by 44 CFR Section 201.6. The planning partnership includes cities, tribal nations, the county, and special purpose districts participating in this process and adopting this plan. To meet all required elements for plan approval, it is necessary for each planning partner to adopt Volume 1 in its entirety, the overview chapter of Volume 2, and their own jurisdictional annex.

The County specific mitigation strategies are located in the Unincorporated County Annex in Volume 2, so DEM is requesting the approval of Volumes 1 and 2 in their entirety.

Planning Process

The HMP was developed in collaboration with County departments and 39 public planning partners throughout Snohomish County. The process took approximately 18 months to complete and adheres to the standards and requirements set in the FEMA Local Mitigation Planning Policy and FEMA Comprehensive Preparedness Guide 101 as well as requirements in the Emergency Management

Accreditation Program and the Community Rating System (CRS). The plan is aligned with the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update, the 2025-30 Capital Improvement Program and the draft Communitywide Climate Resiliency Plan.

County staff and planning partners held monthly Planning Team meetings and briefed the following committees on a Steering Committee level:

- Snohomish County Emergency Management Advisory Board
- Snohomish County Emergency Management Coordinating Committee
- Snohomish County Climate Action Advisory Board
- Snohomish County Tomorrow Steering Committee

A public survey was open from May to October of 2025 to gather feedback from residents about their perceptions of hazards, mitigation needs, and priorities. The project team also hosted four mitigation strategy workshops in July of 2025, and 31 mitigation strategies were submitted. The Planning Team refined five of them into countywide mitigation strategies, located in Volume 1, the base plan of the HMP, and 26 unincorporated county mitigation strategies, located in Volume 2 in the Unincorporated County Annex.

A public review period for the plan was open for 30-days during October of 2025, and public feedback was incorporated prior to adjudication of the final draft into the final plan. The final plan was sent to the Washington State Emergency Management Division (WA EMD) for an initial review on November 14th, 2025 as described in more detail below in “Next Steps.”

HMP Goals and Strategies

The goals in the HMP were developed collaboratively by the Planning Team and align with FEMA’s National Preparedness Goal and the County’s Strategic Plan.

Goal 1: Protect Life, Infrastructure, Property, and the Environment

Goal 2: Build Community Support and Sustain the Economy

Goal 3: Increase Public Awareness and Engagement

Goal 4: Make Collaborative Decisions

Goal 5: Expand Understanding of Hazards

Goal 6: Implement Effective Mitigation Strategies

Planning partners developed 31 specific mitigation strategies supporting the goals that cover:

- Public Outreach and Information
- Plan Coordination and Implementation
- Data Collection and Mapping
- Development Regulations
- Hazard Preparedness
- Hazard Damage Reduction
- Critical Facilities Replacement/Retrofit

Next Steps

DEM submitted the 2025 HMP Update to WA EMD and FEMA for review and approval in November of 2025. The 2020 HMP coverage for Snohomish County lapsed on January 12, 2026. WA EMD approved the plan in January of 2026, and as of May 2026, FEMA has given provisional approval pending local adoption. DEM is requesting the approval and adoption of the HMP by the County Council to expedite the final approval process, end the current lapse in coverage, and re-establish eligibility to apply for funding under the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act's Hazard Mitigation Assistance grants programs. DEM will continue to assist the planning partners with development of their HMP Annexes (funding dependent), work with County departments to implement the HMP strategies including the implementation of the new Capital Improvement Program hazard screening process and facilitate an Annual Progress Report to track progress of the mitigation strategies. The HMP Annual Progress Report will also meet compliance requirements for the annual Community Rating System report the County is required to submit to maintain the current National Flood Insurance Program rating.